Opening Remarks - Fall 2014

Good morning ladies and gentlemen!

Thank you for coming this morning. Perhaps this venue change will work for us today. To begin with, I want to thank all of you for making my first semester as president a very welcoming one as well as a productive one. My wife and I have been embraced by the college community in a way that exemplifies why Alfred State is great and also why I am personally excited to be part of the Alfred State family. This morning, I also want to welcome our new employees and hope you find your time here as rewarding as I have so far.

Introduction of new employees by VPs.

In today's remarks I want to cover several important areas. First, I want to provide you some framework of the college’s vision. This vision, along with the goals that are being developed collaboratively across all departments, will be the impetus and the background for our strategic plan. We will continue to use the template for strategic planning that we have in the past for at least another year. It is my responsibility as president to set the vision for the college, and I will keep it simple and succinct. The vision of Alfred State is, “Alfred State will emerge as THE College of Technology in the SUNY system.” Ladies and gentlemen, we are on our way, but we have lots of work ahead. I have been questioned as to why the vision is not broader than the SUNY system, but it is simply our starting point.

Here are the following 10 points that will help to frame this vision.

Technology Investment - software, instructional technology, infrastructure, training, BYOD, wireless, supporting faculty needs, innovation, cutting edge, new website.

Enrollment - expected growth 3-5%, new students, retention rates, graduation rates, it will not happen by accident, pushing winter, spring and summer sessions.

Resource Development - concentrate on scholarships and technology, it is my job! employee campaigns, major events, alumni giving development, impacting budget more positively, impacting departmental budgets, in-kind gifts, grant writing.

Facilities - purchase the Wellsville campus, boiler project, AG building, Pioneer Center, advanced mfg building, Wellsville facility upgrades, the farm upgrades, and OMG MacKenzie, general program needs, athletics.

Programs - defining the process, viable new programs, relevant, how do we make current programs better and offer options?

Perception - not just your daddy's vo-tech school, visibility in our communities, marketing and PR.

Quality Processes - managing the what if's, using data, tracking data, reporting data, Accreditation visit (absolutely at the forefront of our vision), are we better this year than we were last year?

College Culture - distinctive, student life, student-centered, protecting the experience, It is the Alfred experience that so many speak of when I visit with them.
Meeting Benchmarks - setting goals, meeting goals, celebrating success, Power of SUNY

Human Resources - retaining good employees, make it a better place to work.

Obviously these are not all inclusive, but certainly a starting point.

Things have been changing, and will forever be changing. Exciting things are happening and I want you to embrace change, get engaged, and be involved. It takes “us” to make “it.”

Our theme today is “it.” See if you remember some of these slogans. Just Do it – Nike; The way it should be – Yamaha; Because I am worth it – L’Oreal; Because she is born with it – Maybelline; It’s something to do with your brain – Nintendo Game Boy; Membership has its privileges, don’t leave home without it – American Express; I’m loving it – McDonalds; Have it your way – Burger King; It’s better here – Wendy’s; Is it in you? – Gatorade; It keeps going, and going, and going – Energizer batteries; It’s all inside – JC Penney’s.

How many of you know who this is? (play video of Cousin IT). How many of you have fear of clowns because of Stephen King’s classic, “IT”? (play video of best of IT). Do you remember the movies, Whip it, Bring it on, It Happened At The World’s Fair, Just go With it, Heard It In The Movies, As It Is In Heaven, It Waits, Let It Go, Let It Go, It Came from Outer Space, Doin’ It In The Park, Life As We Know It, Let It Ride, Rumor Has It, It’s The Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown….there are more.

What is this thing we call “it.” Have you pondered it? Have you thought much about it? Let’s talk a little about it.

During these opening remarks, I want to tell you in very simple terms that what we do here at Alfred State “matters.” As I speak with alums across the United States - and we just returned from a reception in Atlanta, GA, where we have almost 400 alums - I am learning it is all about the Alfred State “experience.” I am here to tell you that whatever your job or function is here at Alfred State, “it matters.” You matter! It matters if you cut grass, clean restrooms, coach a ball team, work in financial aid or admissions, work for ACES and food services, are faculty members, administrative assistants, secretaries, keyboard specialists, RDs, RAs, police department; every single employee of this college matters. You all play a role in the Alfred experience. (play our homemade video)

It is about that Alfred State experience. Believe me, “it” is the sum of the whole. As someone drives around campus, they often have a first impression and decide whether or not to get out of the car. As they walk around campus and see how it looks and if people are friendly, they make a decision. If they speak to someone on the phone who acts like they are indeed interested and are caring, it helps to begin molding the experience. If buildings and residence halls are dirty or unkempt, it is part of the decision. The instruction is certainly part of the experience; the relationships with faculty members are part of that experience; the things that happen in the residence halls are part of that experience….everyone that works at Alfred State is part of that experience. The “it” that folks talk about is an experience that is enhanced by our distinctives. Continue to help make it the best dang experience possible.

It matters where you work! I want you to be proud of Alfred State. Be careful who helps to shape your opinion of Alfred State. It matters to our students what you do. It matters to our stakeholders what you do. It matters to parents what you do. It matters that we are student-centered. It matters that you take pride in your job and in who you are. It matters that you do a good job; it matters that you do your best; it matters that you are an example. It is easy to see the negative in our job, but it matters that you are happy, which is a choice. Attitude matters! H.G. Wells said, “What really
matters is what you do with what you have.” You have it in your hand! As you have heard me say before - and you will hear me say it over and over - we change lives at Alfred State. Each and every one of you is involved in the shaping and molding of young men and women who will shape the future of our world. I have worked at places that I was not so proud of!

My task here today is to help convince you that it matters what you do and that it is important where you work. It does not so much matter what your job title is, but that what you do does matter. Joe Paterno said, “It is the name on the front of the jersey that matters most; not the name on the back.” If I were to give you all shirts or jerseys with your name or your position here at Alfred on it, the important part of the detail on that shirt is you are Alfred State. Ladies and gentlemen, we are Alfred State. You all contribute to that “experience” I hear so much about.

Clip from “We Are Marshall”.....dub Alfred State after several, “We Are Marshall” ques.

As we view our part, kindness matters, integrity matters, civility matters, courtesy matters, civic engagement matters, sustainability matters, leadership development matters, project-based learning matters, good health matters, student success matters, and I could go on and on.

You may question if you interact with a student - what difference does it make? I am certain most of you have read or heard “the starfish story.” If you contribute to that experience of one student this semester - it matters.

\*The starfish story\*

**Once upon a time, there was an old man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing.** He had a habit of walking on the beach every morning before he began his work. Early one morning, he was walking along the shore after a big storm had passed and found the vast beach littered with starfish as far as the eye could see, stretching in both directions.

Off in the distance, the old man noticed a small boy approaching. As the boy walked, he paused every so often and as he grew closer, the man could see that he was occasionally bending down to pick up an object and throw it into the sea. The boy came closer still and the man called out, “Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?”

The young boy paused, looked up, and replied, “Throwing starfish into the ocean. The tide has washed them up onto the beach and they can’t return to the sea by themselves,” the youth replied. “When the sun gets high, they will die unless I throw them back into the water.”

The old man replied, “But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I’m afraid you won’t really be able to make much of a difference.”

The boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled, and said, “It matters to that one!”

Finally, it should matter to you what you have made of your life and your life’s work. It doesn’t matter where you were born. Remember, H. G. Wells said, “What really matters is what you do with what you have.” It does matter that you set the example; it matters that you do your job well; it matters that you set the example for others; it matters, it matters, it matters!

Samuel Johnson said, “It does not matter how a man dies, but how he lives.” You may recall this portion of the movie, “The Last Samurai.” Play “The Last Samurai” clip. Live your life as it matters.
Many people are known by their occupation. What do you do? Does it make a difference? I suggest that you should be proud of what you do and what you accomplish. We are defined by our families, our relationships, our faith, and many things, but we are also defined by our life’s work. Ladies and gentlemen here today, it is not to be minimized. It is also about your experience at Alfred State.

The song you heard as you came in this morning was Gin Blossoms singing, “As Long as it Matters.” It tells a good story, but if I can apply that song title to our conversation - it should matter to you. It should matter to me. I couldn’t be more proud of Alfred State and the family of incredible employees we have. It matters to me to be part of this family. It matters. I closed spring semester remarks with “I am pioneer to the bone!” It matters.

I have spoken today about how your job matters, how where you work matters, and how you should take pride in your work and that it should matter to you. Someone has said, “If it is to be, it is up to me.”

I will close with this .... **Key to frames video of it matters.** If you help one student here at Alfred (and you may never know who that one person is), it matters to that one person.

Wear the pin and be proud to tell folks “it matters.” With that I bid you Godspeed - have an awesome semester. **Play the Gin Blossoms song**